

WYCOMBE Wanderers' magnificent record of going almost three years without defeat in the Rothmans Isthmian League at Loakes Park, is over. On Tuesday they went down 1-0 to local rivals Slough Town, their first home defeat since November 21, 1972.

During that time, Wycombe have gone the staggering total of 52 league games without losing at home. Only 10 of those were drawn against the following clubs: Ilford 0-0 and 3-3, Dulwich 1-1 twice, Corinthian Casuals 1-1, Tooting 2-2, Hayes 2-2, Walton 2-2, Sutton 0-0 and Enfield 0-0.

The total league record since November 21, 1972 was: Played 52, won 42, drawn 10, lost 0, goals for 130, goals against 35. The record stretched over a period of two years and nine months.

That unbeaten run is unique in the 91 year history of the club and for a long time, has been the envy of every other club in the league. And yet to Wycombe, it must have been like a millstone around their necks. Thousands of spectators have become so used to seeing Wycombe undefeated at home that they expected victories week in, week out. With four titles in five years, everyone has been spoilt with success.

And what's the reason for the end of that record? It's simple... Wycombe were beaten by a superior side on the night.

The Blues were lucky to beat Staines 2-1 on Saturday. On Tuesday they ran out of luck and were exposed as only an average side. Individually, they may have matched Slough for skill but the visitors' superior teamwork deservedly won them the match.

The 'Rebels' knew full well that they had to allow Wycombe as little time and space as possible. But they not only did that, they produced some flowing football and generally looked a far better side. In contrast, Wycombe struggled as a group of individuals and never looked like winning the game. Until they can get some cohesion going, they will continue to struggle — and lose matches.

It is not easy analysing this defeat. When one phase of the game fails, the others struggle and this seemed to be the case against Slough. Wycombe were outplayed in midfield and as a result, the front line and defence also suffered.

Deprived of good service, the forwards — with Dylan Evans surprisingly preferred to Derek Harris — had to fight for everything they could get and never really troubled goalkeeper Paul Barron. At the back, the Blues were put under considerable pressure and often looked slow.

MAIN FAILING

The main failing, however, was the lack of teamwork. The passing was poor throughout and several players were guilty of hanging onto the ball too long. There was also a lack of support for a player in possession.

This, no doubt, can be rectified with more competitive practice. On Tuesday's showing, it seems Wycombe are not the

team they were last season but they still possess players of undoubted skill and consistency.

Apart from Evans replacing Harris, Wanderers made only one other change against Slough, Mick Holifield replacing Dave Alexander in midfield.

Wycombe Wanderers 0, Slough 1

Report by STUART EARP

Slough made their intentions clear from the opening whistle. They forced four corners in as many minutes and had the home side under considerable pressure in difficult conditions. Although the atmosphere was humid, the rain before kick-off had made the surface greasy.

It took Wycombe 10 minutes to get in their first strike at goal with Howard Kennedy blazing over the top, quickly followed by a Geoff Anthony effort that flew wide of the upright. But these attacks were few and far between as Slough competed fiercely for every ball in midfield with former Wanderer Alan Gane and newcomer George Dobson looking extremely useful acquisitions.

Barron, whose goalkicking bordered on the prodigious in

length, saved from Kennedy after a well worked free kick in the 33rd minute but in general, the 'keeper was given precious little to do by the Wycombe strikers, who lacked a recognised 'target man' up front. Although Tony Horseman

worked tirelessly, no one seemed able to hold the ball and set up attacks. Passes went astray as players failed to anticipate movements and when we saw the Blues struggling even at throw-ins to find their fellow players, it demonstrated the lack of basic skills — the skills that one took for granted from last year's front three.

The Slough goal came only two minutes after half time. Paul Devis had the ball on the top wing with Delaney shadowing him. Turning inside, he left the centre half for pace and quickly crossed over the defence to Dobson who headed powerfully past the coverless John Maskell.

Wycombe's task was now simple. They had to take the game by the scruff of the neck and start playing as a team. If

they could string passes together, it looked likely they could break through Slough's defence but with great gaps in midfield, they rarely had the chance. Kennedy drifted out of the game for long periods, while Derek Cottrell was ineffective despite working hard.

Wycombe's struggle was epitomised in their corner ratio. It took them 56 minutes to win their first and they had only one other in the game while Slough amassed ten.

In a bid for goals, manager Brian Lee brought on Harris for the tiring Geoff Anthony in the 66th minute. Three minutes later Evans produced a telling burst of skill when he beat three defenders and sprinted into the box only to finish the move with a sliced shot well wide.

While Wycombe continued to strive to work together, Slough were showing how it should be done. Long passes to both flanks repeatedly stretched the Blues defence which gave their opponents vital seconds to control and use the ball to the best effect.

Hopes of a Wanderers revival similar to Saturday must have been rife amongst supporters but it was Slough who finished the stronger side — as they had been throughout the 90 minutes and Devis might well have increased their lead in the last few seconds when he robbed Maskell, but Keith Mead cleared the danger.

Soon afterwards referee Barker brought the match to a close and Wanderers tasted defeat at home for the first time in three years.

Tuesday's performance emphasised the need for greater application throughout the team. Now the chips are down, it is up to Wycombe to pull themselves up again and put this performance well and truly behind them.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; H. Kennedy, D. Cottrell, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony (sub. D. Harris 66 mins.).

SLOUGH: P. Barron; T. Turl, D. Malley, J. Beyer, R. Underwood; R. Davies, B. Davies, A. Gane; G. Dobson, T. Brown, P. Devis. Sub. P. Stratford (not used).

Referee: J. Barker (Doddlinghurst). **Half time:** 0-0. **Goalscorer:** Slough — Dobson (47).

Official paying attendance: 1,520. **Approximate total attendance:** 1,900.

Unbeaten at home since Nov. 1972

WYCOMBE'S unbeaten Isthmian League record at home stretched from November 21 1972, until Tuesday evening. Here's a complete run-down on those matches.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' UNBEATEN HOME RECORD IN LEAGUE

1972-73 SEASON

November 21, 1972: v Woking lost 1-2, v Oxford City won 1-0, v Sutton United won 3-1, v Ilford drew 0-0, v Walton and Hershaw won 1-0, v Kingstonian won 2-0, v Clapton won 1-0, v Bromley won 2-1, v Corinthian Casuals drew 1-1, v Walthamstow won 2-0.

1973-74 SEASON

Hayes won 4-3, v Barking won 5-2, v Leatherhead won 2-0, v Tooting drew 2-2, v Oxford won 1-0, v Bishop's Stortford won 2-0, v Woking won 3-2, v Dulwich drew 1-1, v St. Albans won 7-0, v Enfield won 2-1, v Clapton won 4-0, v Corinthian Casuals won 7-0, v Kingstonian won 1-0, v Bromley won 7-0, v Sutton United drew 0-0, v Walthamstow won 3-1, v Hitchin won 2-1, v Ilford won 2-1, v Hendon won 2-

0, v Walton and Hershaw drew 2-2, v Leytonstone won 3-0.

1974-75 SEASON

Kingstonian won 2-0, v Slough won 1-0, v Tooting won 2-1, v Walton and Hershaw won 1-0, v Hendon won 5-0, v Hayes drew 2-2, v Leatherhead won 1-0, v Oxford won 2-1, v Clapton won 2-1, v Ilford drew 3-3, v Walthamstow won 1-0, v Sutton United won 3-2, v Hitchin won 2-0, v Leytonstone won 5-1, v Woking won 3-0, v Dulwich Hamlet drew 1-1, v Barking won 5-1, v Bromley won 8-0, v Enfield drew 0-0, v Bishop's Stortford won 3-0, v Dagenham won 1-0.

1975-76 SEASON

Staines won 2-1, Slough lost 0-1. **Overall Isthmian League record since Nov. 21, 1972:** P. 52, W. 42, D. 10, L. 0, G.F. 130, G.A. 35.

K's undefeated

AFTER Tuesday night's 1-0 defeat at the hands of Slough Town — their first home league reverse for almost three years — Wycombe Wanderers face another difficult task tomorrow (Saturday) at Kingstonian, who are unbeaten this season in the Rothmans Isthmian League.

The Blues' performance against their local rivals on Tuesday was eminently disappointing. But they will do well to put the game completely out of their minds and concentrate on working as a team.

It was the marked lack of cohesion, especially in midfield, that brought their downfall against the Rebels and a big im-

provement will be needed if they are to get back on winning form.

Manager Brian Lee, who warned at the club's AGM in July that supporters must prepare themselves for a mediocre season, seems likely to make changes in the side in an effort to find the right blend. The trouble is, three of his players are injured at present. Paul Fuschillo and Paul Sussons have both undergone leg operations recently while Terry Reardon is still not 100 per cent fit. He may consider bringing back Dave Alexander into midfield.

Derek Harris, who is also carrying an injury at the moment, could replace Dylan Evans up front but with the

players available at the moment, it is a matter of getting in as much practice to get some sort of blend and teamwork together.

Richmond Road is not one of Wanderers' happiest hunting grounds. They lost there 3-2 in the final minutes last season and tomorrow face a side with two victories in the league already under their belts. They won 2-0 at Oxford on Saturday and then beat Leytonstone 2-1 on Tuesday.

New coach Tony Slade has got a useful side together this season including new signings Joe Fascione, former Chelsea and Barking, Dennis Cheeseman from Woking and Chris Proctor from Molesey.